

White Knight

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Summary: Regina is the one that he clings to for comfort when he wakes from dreams of monsters doing unspeakable things, but it's Emma that he trusts to protect them. Slightly AU.

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****Note:**** this is a story I'd originally written for another fandom, but since I'm long over writing for that, I decided to post it once more for this particular pairing. And for the last time, I might add. It will stay right here (and on my tumblr, etc.). I've been sucked into this fandom and quite frankly, I feel like this part of the fandom needs more right now. More fics, more hope, just more. So I'm posting this story and more for this audience in particular.

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><p>White Knight

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><p>The first time it happens, it is Emma that wakes first to quiet sniffing and the weight of her son crawling on her legs. It is Emma that becomes instantly alert as she pulls the boy to her chest and hold him to her, brushes dark hair from his damp forehead to expose flushed cheeks and quivering lips. Wide, fearful eyes shine with unshed tears as he stares up at Emma.<p>

"What's wrong, baby?" Emma questions and the first tear slides down a scrunched up cheek. She rests her palm against his face and brushes her thumb back and forth slowly in an effort to wipe his tears and offer reassurance that he is safe—that he is in her arms and nothing will harm him whenever he is there.

"I had a bad dream, Mama," Henry struggles to get out. "You were a white knight I was a prince and there was a monster and it was flying

and it tried to-to k-kill me and the queen, M-momâ€œ"

Emma feels her heart break as her son cuts himself off and starts to cry again in earnest, only to lurch sideways and reach out desperately.

"It's alright, my little prince. You are safe now," and those words are heavy with warmth and Emma feels her heart flutter when she becomes aware that her wife is now sitting beside her and cradling the top half of their son. Emma meets her eyes over the top of Henry's head and moments later they are lying prone again. Emma is on her side facing them, both hands beneath her cheek. Henry, clinging to Regina with his face buried in the crook of her neck. Regina, with bed-tangled hair and lips turned upward in a soft smile, one hand reaching out to settle on Emma's hip and the other scratching lightly at Henry's scalp in a way that has proven soothing to him in any situation. And, oh, the sight of her son and wife tangled together before her eyes makes her heart swell inside of her chest.

Emma sends a heartfelt thank you to whatever higher power exists when the soft cries and pleading for Emma to protect him and Regina from the monster turns to soft snores, prays long and hard that her son is never in this panicked state again. And Henry isn't until several weeks later, the start of a difficult time where he has a string of bad dreams in a row, a few nights a week for the next four (though it does end eventually and the sleep Henry gets is full and undisturbed every night).

Those nights where their cheerful, outgoing son is reduced to a small, terrified child that curls in on himself while he clings to Regina and cries and falls into restless sleep between them are some of the most difficult nights of Emma's lifeâ€œand the longest, in which she forces herself to stay awake until just before the sun starts to rise and falls asleep for an hour or two until she wakes to the sound of Regina's alarm and Henry's backside inches from her face.

The morning that follows a night where Emma watches over her son and her wife, prepared to offer comfort at any moment should Henry, or her wife, need to battle residual feelings stemming from night terrors that plague their mind long after they wake, has become routine in that she is not surprised when she wakes up nose-to-butt. Emma knows that Henry will wiggle until Regina agrees to get out of bed and will be out of the room as soon as she does, that Regina will lean forward and kiss Emma thoroughly until her toes curl and she herself is wide awake. Emma knows that when she wanders downstairs and into the kitchen, she will be greeted by Regina with fresh brewed coffee in her favorite mug and a soft kiss against her cheek and a whispered _good morning, my brave knight_ that leaves heat simmering low in her abdomen.

The morning after the last time it happens, as Emma leans against the counter near where Regina is starting to prepare breakfast and sips her coffee slowly, Henry takes the mug from her hands and sets it off to the side. He wraps his arms around her neck and hugs her tightly and then wiggles and squirms against tickling fingers on his side until she puts him on the ground. As he leaves the room, he picks up a book that she's sure is better suited for a child over his five years.

"I almost can't wait to see how Henry turns out, what kind of person he is going to be. I might have given birth to him, but that boy is all you... and he is beautiful. I take comfort in protecting our son, keeping him safe. Protecting my family makes me happy," Emma says. She lifts herself on to the countertop and ignores the eye-roll directed at her as she does so. And then after a moment, she asks, "Why does he always cuddle you?"

At the questioning look Regina gives her, she continues. "I mean, you always get his arms around you and his head on your chest and all I get is his little butt in my face."

"Our son is very aware of your need to protect. Whether it be the citizens of our... eccentric little town with that badge on your hip or the members of your family, you are always protecting those around you. Fiercely, I might add," Regina explains as she moves to stand between Emma's legs, places her hands on her thighs while her lips graze the curve of Emma's jaw. "Henry might want me to hold him in my arms, but you are the one he trusts to protect him. With your life, if need be. Why do you think he wakes you up whenever he has a bad dream instead of just lying down between us? You're his hero, Emma."

"I think I understand now," Emma says after several long moments where Regina trails feather-light kisses along her jaw to her ear.

"I assure you, Henry will be beautiful and brave like his mother. He will be a good man. And one day, he will be the one protecting his own family."

"That kid doesn't even know how blessed he's going to be," Emma says quietly, lips slowly curling upward, "I have the privilege of being able to watch my wife and son—the two loves of my life, cuddled together every night. There is endless beauty in this world, but nothing will ever compare to the two of you."

"But for now, he is simply our son and you are his savior. The sweet-talking white knight, slaying the monsters that chase after us in his dreams," Regina reminds her.

"I mean what I said, Regina."

"I know, and that's one of the reasons I love you."

"Oh, yeah? There's more?" The words are teasing and are rewarded with teeth nipping sharply at her earlobe followed by a tongue flicking playfully, soothing the sting.

"Well, that and your willingness to put your life on the line for our little prince and myself both in dreams and reality. As your queen, I think it's high time I reward you for your service this last month. Given Henry sleeps in his own bed tonight, that is. Would you like that, my love?" and all Emma can do for a moment is swallow hard as Regina purrs, as she feels the words against the shell of her ear.

"Yes, your majesty."

End
file.